Reaching People under 40 while Keeping People over 60

Book Summary and Discussion Guide

**PART 1: Understanding the Challenge of Church Today**

Chapter 1 – “Why Pastors Are Burning Out and Churches Are Dying”

Most of us remember a different day in the church – a simpler time when almost everyone went to church. That day is gone; today many in society have a negative view of Christians and church in general. Language, rituals, traditions and values are not as clear and readily accepted as they once were. The biblical message is constant, but the church needs to alter its methodology so that people in today’s new world can hear the “good news” in ways they can understand and embrace. This book is about reaching people, evangelism, making disciples and carrying out Jesus’ command to reach people. In all probability, keeping the sixty-plus crowd happy almost always assures that the church will reach few new people under age forty. Challenges for bridging the gap are immense; solutions complicated. Heart-held beliefs may have to change, tensions may erupt and relationships may be challenged. The “builder” generation - people over sixty – are rapidly aging out of the leadership base and the tithing base and they are not being replaced by people under forty. The longer churches delay adapting structures and programming – not the message – to the changing world, the more difficult church life becomes.

Churches who want to stay in a *holy huddle* and be a hotel for saints rather than a hospital for sinners will eventually disappear. Church leaders have a biblical mandate to equip saints for the work of ministry. Jesus spent more time at parties than he did in the synagogue. God is birthing a new “scattered” church in the secular world.

Pastoring and serving as lay leadership in churches today is challenging. Pastor-bashing often occurs and the key is to move from pastor-bashing to pastor-blessing. Ridicule and bashing are not the image we want to present of Christ’s church; they tarnish the church’s witness to the world.

Potential for the church is great. Every community is filled with people who do not know Jesus Christ. The key to change is to change values and beliefs before changing behavior.

Coaching Questions:

* What are issues in this chapter you most identify with now?
* Who are other persons who might identify with the same/similar issues?
* What actions might you take to begin to work through some of the identified issues?
* What is your next step now?

Chapter 2 – “Church: A Hotel for Saints or a Hospital for Sinners? “

Jesus’ last words to his followers were to go and make disciples. The New Testament says much more about making disciples than about nurturing and providing fellowship for those already in the church. Many churches have turned their focus inward instead of outward; how does this happen? Growing churches are dynamic; they each people and care for one another as well as those outside the church. Plateaued or declining churches get used to the status quo. The pastor’s primary job becomes keeping everyone inside the church happy, while Scripture calls pastors not to keep members happy but to equip and challenge them to be missionaries of the good news. Breaking out of the status quo means taking risks, and the desire for harmony often outweighs the desire to be obedient, faithful followers of Christ. We must ask ourselves – are we trying to preserve the church for ourselves or are we trying to do church in a way that reaches out to a new generation?

For the church to be on mission and reaching people under forty, it must be as outwardly focused as it is inwardly focused; concerned as much about “them” and “us.”

Jesus connected with people and invited them to follow him (“come and see”); he built relationships. We must invite folks to come and see and build relationships so we can communicate.

Jesus invited people to follow him just as they are (“come follow me”). He did not begin the journey with sets of stipulations or preconditions. We must invite others to come and follow Christ. We must listen and learn about their world as we seek to include them in the life of the church.

Jesus spent the most time with those he called to be with him (“come be with me”). Developing leaders requires love for them and love for the church; it takes time and patience. We must mentor, teach, and be willing to provide opportunities to grow the next generation of leaders and disciples.

Jesus’ ultimate goal was for his disciples to become like him (“abide in me”). We must love, nurture and pray for those who are new to the church and leadership so that older and younger leaders will all be branches of the same vine.

Coaching Questions:

* What did you learn about the four phases of Jesus’ ministry that you didn’t know before?
* How can you follow Jesus’ example in your circle of friends and family?
* What are your next steps?

Mission or Maintenance:

1. Our buildings are very important; we maintain them well and use them often.
2. Our staff reports on the number of pastoral visits they make.
3. We are always offering new opportunities for participation in ministries.
4. We get people involved in disciple-making and growing groups.
5. We work to fill every program position in our organization.
6. Our church tries to help Christ followers find places to use their gifts in and outside the church.
7. We try not to upset our senior church leaders.
8. The leaders in our church work hard to make the church a stable, unchanging anchor in our world.
9. Our church has a great fellowship, loving one another and taking care of each member’s needs.
10. Our church looks for ways to meet the needs of people in our community and even around the world.

1,2,5,7,8,9 – maintenance statements

3,4,6,10 – mission statements

**PART II: Discovering the Points of Tension**

Chapter 3 –“When Generations Collide”

Most churches in America do worship, Bible study and nearly everything else in the same way as fifty years ago. Part of the challenge of reaching people under forty while keeping those over sixty is a generational issue; generations have different preferences for how they worship, learn, lead, relate, do ministry and interact with one another. They have different personal preferences and lifestyles, styles of music and attire. We must work to build bridges rather than barriers between the generations.

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| Traditional Worship has tended to be: | Contemporary worshipers seek: |
| Rational or linear | Experiential |
| Performance based (choir/preacher) | Participatory (congregational) |
| Centered on words | Image-rich |
| Focused on individual | Connected |

American Generations

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| Builders | 1900-1946; Great Depression, WWI, II, Pearl Harbor, stayed married, one income, hierarchical, clear gender roles, family stayed together/prayed together |
| Boomers | 1946-1964; TV, Cold War, assassinations, civil rights mvmt, Vietnam, sexual revolution, drugs, Peace Corps, mistrust of authority, >50% divorce rate, 61% Protestant Sr. pastors, biggest % of givers to church, love power and holding on to it. Many slipping away from the church |
| Busters (Generation/Gen X) | 1965-1983; AIDS epidemic, technology, video games, accept “situational ethics,” turned off by parents’ work ethic, short attention span, see values of parents’ generation as empty, most don’t go to church |
| Millennials | >1984; mosaic generation, technology and prosperity, known for being stressed and worried, materialistic, want best of everything, need unconditional love, leaders who won’t abandon them, expect media/technology to have important part in worship/education |

Coaching Questions:

* What insights have you gained? How will they affect how you do church in the future?
* Who are three people from generations other than yours with whom you might spend time with and learn from?

Chapter 4: - “Is the Church a Business? When Mission Challenges Personal Preferences”

One reason we are not reaching people under forty is that we stay in our “holy huddles” that make us feel good. We do not want to penetrate the culture; rather, we often insulate and isolate ourselves from the culture. The church has a business side and ministry side and sometimes the two are incompatible. Some see the solution to church problems through a management lens: how many members, how much money, how many staff, etc. The biblical mandate lens asks us to look at disciple-making, caring for the poor, being an advocate for justice, creating centers of redemption and spiritual renewal and our meeting agendas should reflect such priorities.

Today money follows ministry and community. Unless people feel they are part of the church’s mission and their money is helping the hurting and spiritually thirsty, they don’t give time, energy or money. People of our mobile age are seeking community and want to give as they experience community. Invite people to give to humanitarian, mission, family, community needs. A business exists for its clients. Church is different. The church exists for those outside its walls and membership. Jesus died for the world, not just the church. In fact, the real ministers of the church are the persons in the pew, not the people behind the pulpit.

What business is your church in? How do you measure effectiveness and success? Do we believe the primary purpose, the mission of the church is to care for those inside the church or to reach those outside the church? Churches across the country are going out of business because they have lost their relevancy. Builders (those over sixty) are being called to become missionaries to a younger generation, to speak their culture’s language, develop bridges and discover ways to communicate about God’s awesome truth and power to the younger generation.

Coaching Questions:

* What do you resonate with most in this chapter?
* What are disconnects for you as you read the chapter?
* How can you deal with these disconnects?
* Who can help you?

Chapter 5 – “When Cultural Realities Impose on Church Traditions”

People in America today struggle with relationships; social groups are on the decline. Churches are another institution people are often declining to join. We are in a changing world and the church will either change or it will die. Boomer leaders (born 1946-1964) are noticeably absent in many church leadership circles. Several reasons for this trend include: prosperity (weekend vacations, weekend homes, etc.); disappointment/disillusionment; spiritual apathy; desire for a hands-on approach to missions; view that church programming is irrelevant; view that church has impact deficit and search for significance.

Questions church should ask is how to retool programs and success standards to attract Boomer leaders into church leadership? What shifts would be called for in our church? How do we move from being “in” church to “as” church? How do we take our discipleship to other areas of our lives; e.g. workplace, civic activities, etc.?

In order to recruit more young adult leaders into the church, they need to be convinced that the Bible has relevance in their thinking. By the same token, older Christians have to be comfortable with young adults questioning everything that they (older Christians) readily accept. Church leaders need to listen to the younger generation. Those who challenge methodology are doing so because they care about the church. And, when older adults listen, chances are that younger adults will in turn listen to older adults.

Coaching Questions:

* Who do you know in the 20-something age group? What has shaped them?
* How do you typically respond to this age group?
* How could you improve this response to build bridges?
* What are gaps between what they value and desire and what your church currently offers?
* How might you go about closing this gap? Where will you start? What changes are you willing to make?
* How can you begin to include this age group in leadership roles or teams?
* Who can help you with this ministry challenge as you nurture the church and church leaders of the future?

We live in a postmodern world, which is a present reality of all of Western society. Following is a history lesson.

Modern Versus Postmodern

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| Premodernism | Beginning of Western civilization-  ~1500. God centered; church most powerful institution on earth. Communication largely oral; most people did not read/write. Stained glass windows told Bible stories. Economy based on agriculture, trade and craftsmen. |
| Modernism | 1500 to ~2000. Enlightenment/Age of Reason. Invention of printing press. Knowledge became powerful; people began to search for the truth rather than to accept what they were told. Scientific discoveries, inventions changed the world. Reasoning, logic, science formed basis of understanding, even interpreting God. Reason was more important than faith. |
| Postmodernism | 2000-current. Age of reason has ended. Internet has made information, good and bad, readily available around the world to all, at the same time. Reader must determine how useful and accurate information is. Bible seen as one of several religious books and subject to interpretation. Experience and intuition equally valid. New age is reaction to failures or perceived failures of the modern age. |

Storytelling is key for ministering to and with postmoderns. They like stories, see themselves as living stories. They connect to biblical stories as places of exploration, guidance and instruction. Most stories offer a way to see God bringing order out of chaos. Sometimes we must clash with culture rather than appear to be nothing more than a part of it. To grow, the church must be externally focused and those churches: know that good new and good deeds go together; they focus on having an impact on community; they are vital to the health and well-being of their communities; they believe that ministering and serving are normal expressions of Christian living; and they are evangelistically effective.

Coaching Questions:

* What are your take-aways from this chapter? What’s ringing in your heart now?
* Who else do you know who might identify with these same issues?
* How can you move forward in your understanding and practice in a way that will help your church move forward?

**PART III: Finding the Win-Win for the Church (A Coach Approach That Moves You to Mission)**

Chapter 6: “What’s a Win-Win for People over Sixty and People under Forty?”

People over sixty are not always barriers to growth. Pastors, staff and volunteer church leaders can be their own worst enemies.

It is important to identify barriers to growth, which could include: prejudice against other ethnicities; not knowing how to grow; wanting things to stay the same; fear of success; lack of a plan; lack of member involvement; inadequate resources; no clear understanding of need for change; satisfaction w/status quo; lack of spiritual foundation; fear of reaching “needy” people; believing change requires too much time, energy, other resources; fear of losing some current members; being comfortable with things as they are; fear of losing close family feel; lack of agreement about new direction; discouragement because of previous efforts; resistance to learning new language of those under forty; lack of clear goals; no clear mission statement; no value-added proposition; lack of appropriate metrics; not understanding postmodern culture. By identifying barriers, we can develop plans to overcome them.

Chapter 7 – “What’s a Win-Win for Your Church?”

Churches that decide to live in comfort rather than on mission in the world will face consequences, eventually dying out after the generation of current members die. Many leaders and churches want to do better at fulfilling the biblical commission for the church, but they don’t want to face the steep learning curve required, or they don’t want to encounter risks or they simply do not want to rock the boat.

Today people are very busy: seven day workweeks; dual-career marriages; increasing numbers of single-parent families. The church must figure out how to reach the unchurched. Church organization should be assessed: an accurate and honest look at the function of all aspects or the church organization. Most churches’ major organizational problem is that much of their function is maintenance-oriented or care-giving oriented while disciple-making or evangelism functions are ignored or not formally functional.

Church decision making should be reviewed and streamlined where possible to increase efficiency, as well as engage and empower more members in ministry.

Communication is key to how change is perceived and accepted. People are busy. Multiple forms of communication are important: on line, posters; newsletters; texts; web site; phone banks for seniors; etc.

Church meetings should matter, be result focused. The best leader for a result-oriented meeting is the best leader in the group. Coach approach to leadership keeps a meeting moving and helps make meetings more fruitful. Good coaches move you from where you are to where you want to be, and from talking to action.

Coaching Questions:

* What can you do to make the shift needed in our church meetings?
* What options are available to you to make the shifts needed?
* What are you willing to do now? Who can help you?

Lay leaders are called to be spiritual leaders during this age of change and transition. Churches will never go beyond their spiritual leadership and lay leaders are part of that spiritual leadership team. Eight realities speak to the role of lay leaders:

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| Call | What are lay leaders called to do in your church? How has God gifted them? |
| Preparation | What are pains, struggles, experiences of your leaders and where/how do they interface with needs in congregation and community? |
| Vision | What is God calling the church to be and do? What is God’s plan for the church? |
| Character | What are the virtues and strengths of the body of Christ and its leaders in your church? |
| Sending | Where is God calling the church to be and live out her ministry? |
| Conflict | How can the church deal with the conflict created between what is and what God is calling us toward? |
| Shared leadership | How do spiritual leaders model shared leadership with one another and those in the pew? |
| Unending story | What are the next steps for the church and how can lay leadership lead the church forward? |

Do we want a “compliant church” or a “creative church” and what are lay leaders’ roles in those scenarios?

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| Compliant Church Values | Creative Church Values |
| Complies w/historic constitution/bylaws | Recognizes constitutions can be changed to be relevant |
| Complies with how we’ve always done things | Understands culture, people, needs change and structures/programs must change |
| Works to keep everyone happy in church family | Understands that conflict is not bad; few dissatisfied persons may be necessary to become more relevant and reach community for Christ |
| Preserving/maintaining actions takes precedence in leadership meetings | Mission/ministry always first on meeting agendas |
| Focuses on membership preferences as church focus | Focuses on needs and preferences of those outside the church as church focus |

Coaching Questions:

* What insights surface from this chart?
* What challenges do you see for your leaders/leadership groups/teams?
* Who in church shares your concerns/who will disagree?
* What bridges of communications or learning might be built to nurture forward movement among leaders?
* What are you willing to do and by when?

Team leadership can maximize everyone’s strengths in a consensus-building environment rather than a more traditional top-down business model of management that churches have used in the past. Team leadership includes pastor and staff ministers working together in a leadership team. That leadership team then coaches volunteer leaders and groups in the church. Consider these four “secrets” of team leadership –

1. Secret about the cause: cause first; each other second;

Coaching Questions:

* Does your church have a mission statement?
* Is that mission statement evident in what the church does?
* Do church leaders know the mission statement? Are they committed to it?
* If not, what needs to change?

1. Secret about community: excitement, energy about the work. Focus on character, competence and chemistry. The team looks for complementary gifts. They want to go in the same direction, together.

Coaching Questions:

* How does your team measure up in regards to chemistry?
* Does your team have a good ix of gifts? What’s lacking? How can you fill the void?
* What steps can you take to maintain or improve the level of community in your leadership team?

1. Secret characteristics: collaboration and competition; compassionate and comfortable with conflict; spontaneous and accountable.

Coaching Questions:

* How comfortable is your team with conflict?
* Is your team a “yes” or “no” team?
* Can such contrasting characteristics exist on your team? Or is the need to be polite, to not hurt feelings, to stay in your ministry area and not cross any lines more important?
* Which characteristics of your team help, and which hinder, your team’s doing what they are called to do? What needs to change? How will you make the changes?

1. Secret for creating culture: enthusiasm, commitment, attitude, and concern for the cause and for one another.

Coaching Questions:

* What standards does your team set for the church?
* How do you see attitudes, commitment, values of the team reflected in the congregation?
* Do you like what you see? If not, what needs to change?

Not all leadership teams are full-time ministry employees anymore. The team may be a mix of full-time, part-time, retired and volunteer leaders. Increasing numbers of clergy are burning out: overworked; lack of continuing education; family issues; struggle with physical health; underpaid; dissatisfaction w/ inability to find fulfillment and effectiveness in ministry; required to maintain institutions rather than work from the calling and gifting. We have lost balance in ministry, focusing too much on institutional maintenance and survival rather than perpetuation of mission and ministry to the hurting, lost, spiritually thirsty and broken of our world. The biblical model of equipping saints for the work of ministry has given way to a pastor-driven model to “take care of us at all costs.” This model has led to spectator congregations, God’s “frozen chosen,” who have lost sight of serving as God’s missionaries.

More often than not, the congregation takes on the personality and focus of its lay leaders and clergy. Following are emerging models for church staffing: mission/ministry focus; equipping focus; discipleship focus and team focus.

Most churches need to rethink Bible study and discipleship to meet people’s needs. For example: shift from focusing on program preservation to people development; shift from limited time frames for education to equipping that is convenient and user friendly; shift from developing a cognitive knowledge base to a community building experience; shift from church development to penetrating culture by integrating faith and life issues; shift from church growth to spiritual formation and integration.

The church has a role to play in helping people in economic hardship. Examples include workforce training, support for families touched by economic hardship, spiritual companions for families experiencing business challenges; provide forums for people to share stores of recovery and faith formation in the “refiner’s fire.”

Coaching Questions:

* What are the places where your life naturally intersects with persons in need of good news?
* What might it look like to practice “walking with” those you encounter?
* What language will help you effectively “talk with” and to be authentic in this relationship as you pray for/seek opportunities to share the good news?
* What are the teachable moments or divine appoints as you practice “life on life ministry?

Relationships are vitally important in a postmodern world. Individual leaders who make these shifts will model for and lead their congregations to make and value similar shifts. What does building bridges to the unchurched look like in a postmodern, post Christian culture?

* Make a choice to leave comfort and take risks;
* Meet people where they are, rather than where we would like them to be;
* Take the initiative and be consistent;
* Learn to listen for understanding rather than judgment
* Learn to listen to understand rather than to talk/respond;
* Learn what they mean by their language/words;
* Listen for life struggles and how the unchurched interpret them;
* Learn to tell your story in words and concepts they can relate to;
* Learn to ask open-ended, nonthreatening questions that connect with heart and not just the head;
* Find common interests;
* Once trusted, learn to connect faith stories and biblical stories/concepts.

Coaching Questions:

* What might your next steps be for connecting with the unchurched and the churched seeking more meaning in life, more connection with God and others?
* What strategies or ideas might work in your situation?
* Who are the core believers who share this vision? How can our church stop holding onto our comfort zones or traditions that have worked for us in the past but that might not be as effective today?

Regarding stewardship – postmoderns respond to issues of the heart rather than institutional maintenance or survival; postmoderns are primarily web or multimedia people rather than print people; most churches/agencies spend most of their resources addressing the builder generations’ interests and needs, hoping it will reach the next generation, also; and, telling our life transformation stories is more significant than calling for commitment and loyalty to denominational agencies/issues.

Chapter 8 – “Bible Study for Twenty-first Century Adults?”

Creating a win-win for individuals and churches issues forth from a meaningful encounter with others and God through relevant Bible study. Bible study will continue to flourish but will radically change to accommodate a growing diversity of different belief systems, busy lives and changing families. In the future, Bible study will become more personalized/individualized, decentralized, digitized, customized and improvised.

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| Personalized/individualized | Embraced by many, relationships will be catalyst for Bible study. |
| Decentralized | At student’s convenience, including workplace |
| Digitized | Webcams, CDs, DVDs, extensive use of website |
| Customized | Recognition of differing learning styles, based on life issues/questions, attractive to adults seeking trust and answers to life struggles and relationship challenges |
| Improvised | Teachable moment essential, those who know teach others, Bible study will be more about asking right questions at the right time than lecturing, Bible study will be more popular with adults in next decades than recent years |

Coaching Questions:

* What are your take-aways from reading this chapter?
* What ideas are you willing to work on now?
* Who could help you?
* How could you design an effective podcast?
* What reframing of your role and function in adult education and spiritual formation might need to happen?
* What would interactive online learning opportunities through our church Website look like?
* Who in your church are your technicians that could help you?
* Who is involved in a weekday decentralized Bible study or online Bible study now?
* Who might be interested in online learning in the future?
* How could you make Bible study more effective in your church and for your community?

Chapter 9 – “What Are the Options for Creating a Win-Win Situation?”

Letting go of the familiar or preconceived concepts or ideas – particularly when they have worked for you – is challenging at best.

Win-Win Approaches

* Allocate limited resources to target those over sixty and those under forty
  + Church budget and staff time should reflect their interests
* Plan a mix of “go” and “come” strategies
  + Make good use of church building – “come” strategy
  + Opening a home to unwed mothers to model Christian values, loving family, regular church attendance – “go” strategy
* Change values before changing structure
  + Changing values turns hearts to God
  + As more people are focused on mission, they will be less concerned about focusing on maintenance issues
* Know the trends
  + Examining trends at other churches can provide ideas
  + Relevancy is demanded
* Maximize potential and opportunity
  + Celebrate people being blessed, not a project being accomplished
  + Manage the present while birthing the future
* Change approach for outreach
  + Hunters take risks; rock the boat a bit
  + Nurturers/gatherers take care of new finds from Hunters
* Create parallel structures
  + Keep ministries to those over sixty
  + Create comfortable entre points for those under forty

Potential Ministries

* Single parents
* Those who are divorced
* Adults in dual-career marriages
* Faith/work issues
* Build on strengths rather than weaknesses
* Find and follow focus
* Retool staffing and leadership core
* Reinvent church’s organization
* Empower lay leadership teams
* Create partnerships and alliances with broader community
* Create networks that foster intergenerational and lifelong learning
* Allow time for transition to take place
  + Not everyone will like new direction
  + Don’t try to do everything at once
  + Pray constantly, plan well, move at a steady pace, work hard, expect great things from God
* Love the legitimizers
* Affirm all generations in the process
* Make transformation, not change, the goal

Chapter 10 – “What about the 40- or 50-Somethings?”

* Catalysts for change
* Thought leaders/innovators
* Bridge builders between generations

Coaching Questions:

* What are your take-aways from this chapter?
* Who can help you move forward in being church for all generations?

Chapter 11 – “Celebrating Church for All Generations”

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| FROM | TO |
| Building walls | Building bridges |
| Measuring attendance | Measuring impact |
| Encouraging the saints to attend the service | Equipping the saints for the works of service |
| “Serve us” | Service |
| Duplication of human services and ministries | Partnering with existing services and ministries |
| Fellowship | Functional unity |
| Condemning the city | Blessing the city and praying for it |
| Being a minister in a congregation | Being a minister in a parish |
| Anecdote and speculation | Valid information |
| Teacher | Learner |

Much of the stress and dis-ease found in many churches is because the mission has become dictated more by members than by God and members often fight for preserve forms/structures/programs rather than to preserve God’s mandates and missions for his church. The New Testament is more concerned with the function of the church than the forms of the church.

Coaching Questions:

* How do you respond to this?
* Where does most of your time and energy go – form or function preservation?
* What is valued more by the leadership core of your church – preserving the forms or fulfilling the Great Commission and the Great Commandment?

An organization never moves beyond its leadership. Leaders rarely grow forward without clear guidelines, goals, vision, values and accountability. Rarely can you change a church structure until you first change the values, vision and investment of leadership. Leaders should be expected to:

* Be present
  + Attendance, involvement and consistency are critical
* Be prepared
  + Be trained, mentored and mentor others as part of commitment to leadership
* Be disciple-makers
* Be engaged in spiritual life disciplines
  + Prayer, fasting, a personal ministry, strong personal witness and Bible study
* Be accountable to other capable, trusted and mature spiritual leaders for carrying out their function in the body of Christ

The call of God for his church is to be on mission; to be salt, light and leaven; and to be faithful and fruitful. In the past, Christians and churches were identified more by their doing than by their being. The postmodern world is calling us to ***be***.

Heartfelt connection generates great power, even between different generations. The biblical story of Mary and Elizabeth illustrates the principle clearly.

Coaching Questions:

* What is God birthing in and through you?
* Who are the people that cause your baby to leap within you?
* Where are the places that fuel your dreams?
* Who are those in other generations that fuel your dreams and cause your baby to leap?
* How can you learn from those others, and vice versa?
* What is needed to make this happen now?